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ALFRED GROTJAHN, FOUNDER OF SOCIAL HYGIENE*

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The Grotjahns were a family of physicians, whose founder, Heinrich Grotjahn (1794-1872) served as a surgeon with the Hanoverian troops against Napoleon at Waterloo. After the war he accompanied several officers to Göttingen to continue to dress their amputation wounds. At the same time he studied medicine to be graduated in 1818. His skill at amputations in the era before anesthesia brought many to him to be operated upon at his home or in the village in which he lived. They also spared themselves the horrors of "hospital" gangrene then rife in western Europe. Heinrich's son and Alfred's father, Robert Grotjahn, also a physician, had been graduated at Zürich where he met his wife. She died of sarcoma in 1875 when Alfred was six years old. Her husband married her sister the following year.

Robert Grotjahn was a keen student of medicine all his life and a physician much in demand. Unfortunately he was a morphine addict and often sought hospitalization for relief. His second wife, a manic-depressive, was frequently in sanitoria. Alfred's childhood was obviously not a happy one. He avoided his father as much as possible, spending long hours in the garden or in the nearby fields. In his auto-

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biography, Grotjahn characterized himself as an almost psychopathic child. Because of nocturnal enuresis he was beaten, shut up in the cellar, dashed with cold water, made to wash his bed linen before the servants. What most affected the child were the customary avowals of repentance after a day of punishment. What saved him in such a household was the undoubtedly paranoid tendency that first manifested itself as an unconquerable self-will, later as an obstinate hold on a goal, no matter what. He was schooled in taking a positive position on everything, a position that was usually in opposition to that held by others.

The child was educated in the village private school and at the age of ten was a boarding pupil with the pastor of a neighboring town. The new household was one of genuine piety and a centre of local society. The master was an excellent pedagogue and so strong was the impression he made on young Grotjahn that the latter, in later life, adopted his teacher's preference for black clothes. Hymnal verses and bible excerpts formed the nucleus of study and were learned by heart.

At the gymnasium Grotjahn at first was scarcely a success. He had no normal memory for names and dates, learning only by re-reading, re-writing, working at home from five in the afternoon until before midnight with but an hour's interruption. Grammar was the chief subject and taught *ad nauseam.* Cheating and annoying the teacher were the only means of counter-attack. The understanding of a subject was unimportant. He who made the fewest errors at the weekly Latin and Greek oral quizzes was the best pupil. The same system was employed in history where "Who conquered whom, where and when" was the famous model. As a result Grotjahn wrote his native language in involved Latin form and was later obliged to re-write and simplify his sentences. During the nine years at the gymnasium, among the small number of teachers, two fell ill with tabes and a third was a marked psychopath.

Alcohol and tobacco, because forbidden, were indulged in to excess. Grotjahn was unable and unwilling to follow his

fellows, feeling that he acted as a damper upon their ebullient spirits. He had never met an opponent of alcohol and thought himself a miserable exception. The smallest member of his class, he sought compensation in gymnastics, as well as in swimming and skating in which he was outstandingly proficient.

He had found a friend in the son of the village innkeeper, who with plenty of pocket money, bought book after book to which young Grotjahn had access. They were soon interested in the social democratic movement. The innkeeper's son eventually became Prussian finance minister during the early years of the republic. Zola and Hauptmann were among the first to draw Grotjahn's attention to that problem that was his throughout his life and that was with him on his deathbed:—"Why must there be rich and poor? Why are there those in want and those that have too much?"

At graduation from the gymnasium in 1890 he thought of studying political economy and engaging in journalism. His sense of inferiority, the difficulties he had had with composition at school but, most of all, his marked lack of skill in speaking kept him from following his inclinations. Only medicine remained. He knew, however, he could not be his father's successor because of his manual inaptitude which would certainly be a handicap in a country doctor. Another factor favored medicine. His pacifistic leanings saw an advantage in having to serve only a short time as a conscript and not as a front-line combatant in wartime. In Greifswald where he began the study of medicine, when he was not in the dissection room, he attended the various clinics, becoming more and more engrossed in his future profession. He was much more interested in what went on in the living than in what he did with microscope or with his dissections or animal experiments.

Robert Koch was then in his heyday. The first inoculation with tuberculin was to take place. Laurels formed the background before which physicians, nurses and patients

in white grouped themselves to hear an oration by the professor in medicine. Selected patients were then inoculated and three "Hoch!" for Koch closed the ceremony. Grotjahn remarked that the theatrical thunder of Wilhelm's era had not even spared medicine.

His readings in socialism led him to believe that, for him, Marxian socialism was unsatisfactory. He was never able to completely adopt the principle of the class struggle and the materialistic concept of history. At the end of his first academic year he served a required half year in the army, in which sergeants, amenable to gifts of cigarettes and money were directly in charge of the youths. An order to stand by under arms on May Day, 1891 first made him aware, he wrote, of the power of the proletariat and of his class consciousness, this despite his cast of socialism. Not only his reading made him dislike a soldier's life, but also his experiences with those prominent vices that could have no better place for their unbridled development than a barracks. A life in common with other men, without normal contact with women, without common intellectual interests, a community held together by force and commands suppressed, he knew, all better desires and developed all that were undesirable.

The following year was spent at Leipzig under His in anatomy and Ludwig in physiology. Ostwald examined him in chemistry and passed him with an "excellent." Because his father objected to Berlin and its certain political distractions, he chose Kiel for his first clinical year. Quincke headed medicine and Esmarch, with Bier as assistant, surgery. Werth in gynecology did the unusual and gave students ample opportunity to examine patients themselves. Grotjahn also attended a course in sociology under Tonies who was a notoriously poor lecturer. Since Grotjahn and his friend, the innkeeper's son, were the only students to enroll for the course, lectures were soon abandoned, and the three walked and talked their way over the roads outside the city.

In Berlin where he went to complete his studies, Virchow was virtual ruler of the medical faculty as professor of pathological anatomy. Most students paid only for the most essential courses and attended the others without attempting to pay. Such a procedure was impossible at the pathologic institute. Virchow saw to it that all attending his lectures paid for them, although his teaching was poor and augmented by his assistants. His was no disciplinary reason for Virchow retained the major portion of the fees. When enrolling with him for one course, the students were terrorized by the old man into taking all others offered by him.

Influenced by Virchow, the clinicians treated diseases, not patients, neglecting what could not be determined and described microscopically, mechanically or pathologico-anatomically. Von Leyden was an outstanding exception, only to be accused of playing the fool. Olshausen was chief of gynecology, the czaristic von Bergmann, reputedly a lover of the cup, headed surgery. Rubner, who had made his name in Munich under Voit and Pettenkofer, was professor of hygiene. Those who, because of their religion, could get no posts elsewhere, had their own clinics and large student following. Among them was Mendel, the neurologist, Lassar in dermatology, Israel, the surgeon and Lewin in syphilology.

In the fall of 1896 Grotjahn began a general practice in Berlin and it is of interest that in his first year he earned a third of his expenses, two-thirds the next year and that thereafter there was no deficit. Two years later he published his first book, "Alcoholism, Its nature, action and distribution" which had been written during the first years of sparse practice. In its introduction Grotjahn indicated the method that was to be his in all his works: "To complete in social scientific fashion the picture of alcoholism as presented by medicine and so gain a complete understanding of the evil, an understanding contrary to that of known authors who underestimate social factors; in other words, to enlarge the hygienic portrayal to the social hygienic."

In 1903 he added to the literature with a monograph on "Alcohol and Factory" in which he studied alcoholism during working hours, with a review of methods designed to eradicate such evils. Shortly before this he quit the Social Democratic party, not to ally himself with another political group but, as his diary notes, to assure himself what he thought would be the widest possible intellectual freedom of action in pursuing his scientific goal.

Believing that Luther's role as the greatest German popular tribune had been neglected, and although not religious, Grotjahn published in 1907, a volume in the series "From the world of thought of great minds." Dedicated to showing Luther as poet, translator and emancipator, it was a collection of Luther's writings including portions of the Bible translation with editorial comments. Two years later "A selected Bible" appeared, edited by Grotjahn and his brother, in which from Luther's translation, portions were selected, divided into paragraphs and supplied with appropriate titles. It is obvious his was no Marxian socialism. Over ten thousand copies were sold.

Meanwhile he was busy with his work in sociology and in what he was to found as a distinct branch of medicine, social hygiene. He was one of the founders of the German Sociology Association, taking part in the various seminars. The first monograph to appear, 1902, was on changes in popular nutrition in which comparison was made between the diet of rural populations with its marked local character and that of industrial populations with monetary payments. Soon afterward he established the "Annual Report of Social Hygiene and Demography," becoming increasingly better known in academic circles. Waldeyer, the anatomist, who was dean of the medical faculty that year, 1905, was asked to bring before the faculty the question of qualifying Grotjahn as privat-docent for public health and medical statistics. Rubner, the founder of the study of calories, had never forgiven him for his monograph on nutrition in which Grotjahn pointed out the dangers of

evaluating all data on nutrition, including those on farm produce, in terms of calories, and for his insistence that experimental tendencies in hygiene be broadened by the inclusion of the social viewpoint. Rubner was temporarily able to keep Grotjahn off the faculty but fifteen years later it was Rubner who was obliged to induct Grotjahn as full professor of social hygiene.

A trip to England and the recognition that not industrialization, but its abuses, were responsible for retrogressive changes in populations were stimuli for "Social Hygiene and the Problem of Degeneration" that appeared in 1904.

Grotjahn's attempts to found a science of social hygiene met with opposition from all quarters. Some feared that the unpolitical attitude of the physician in political affairs would be endangered or even infected with the treasonable opinions of those characterized as "those malevolent socialists." Others said that medicine in itself was social enough to render superfluous a specialty of social hygiene. Grotjahn, however, believed that conscious attention to social factors in the scientific expression of medicine and hygiene had to be clearly brought to universal recognition. Social hygiene is, in his own words, "the study of the relationship between the disease alterations of the human body to social conditions, emphasizing that between man and nature there is civilization, that the physico-biological point of view in hygiene must be enlarged by social considerations."

Grotjahn proved to be a pathfinder in the field of tuberculosis institutional therapy. In 1907 he suggested a reorientation in the separation of the early tuberculous in small institutionalized homes to lessen the number of sources of infection within the general population. He pointed out the futility of erecting large, almost luxurious sanitoria that aided the individual patient but neglected the masses. He indicated that the decrease in the tuberculosis mortality rate was not the result of the introduction of sanitorium treatment, but was the result of the industrialization of his

country with its increased wealth and the consequent elevated nutritional standards, better dwellings and other hygienic conditions, and he pointed out the lessons to be drawn. This was an introduction to the general problem of public welfare institutions and hospitals. The following year, 1908, he published "The Character of the Hospital and Sanitorium Movement in the Light of Social Hygiene."

The year 1912 was especially fruitful. The first volume of the year was "Social Pathology" which was revised for a third edition in 1923. It was an attempt at a pathology of human diseases from the social viewpoint, taking the disease as the starting point and investigating all relationships between the disease and the most varied of social phenomena. It also portrayed the conditioning of numerous social conditions by definite diseases. A second work of the same year, edited together with Kaup, was a two-volume "Dictionary of Social Hygiene," an exhaustive presentation of the status of everything social hygienic in Germany at that time. The same year saw another victory for Grotjahn. Kaup had been called as assistant professor to Munich to head the division of social hygiene of the Hygienic Institute under Gruber. In Berlin, Rubner had exchanged hygiene for physiology and the new professor of the former science, Flügge, succeeded in obtaining a privatdocentship for Grotjahn with the title of professor. Private practice was still needed to eke out a livelihood. Rubner, who was then in this country, returned to find his opponent a member of the faculty.

Shortly after the outbreak of the war he issued his "Birth Decrease and Birth Regulation in the Light of Individual and Social Hygiene" in which Grotjahn pointed out that birth regulation did not necessarily mean only birth decrease but rather an encouragement of birth factors as well. He thought to accomplish this by securing higher pay for the breadwinner in proportion to the number of children in the family, as well as by taxing the childless and the bachelor for the support of the child-bearers.

Russia's mobilization and attack on East Prussia were, for Grotjahn, a challenge to western Europe and he saw in a possible victory of the Czar a regression in European civilization. Again no one can accuse him of being a Marxian socialist. Acting accordingly, as did most Social Democrats, he volunteered for active service, although he was then ending his forty-fifth year. The next day brought news of the violation of Belgium's neutrality. Shaken to the depths by that event, he immediately recalled his active service application, agreeing only to serve the home garrisons. His scepticism as to German war aims and victory never wavered. In the years of passion and turbulence he never lost his head. He refused to sign the now famous declaration of German university professors that salvation for Europe's civilization lay only in the victory of German militarism, calling Wundt and Haeckel, who did sign, sufferers from an acute psychic upset. He felt that Germans had been called upon to save a rotten Austro-Hungarian empire from the consequences of its own decay.

He spent a month in a garrison town as junior physician with rank of sergeant, despite his age and academic standing. He was told that his failure to be commissioned was attributable to the fact that he had not done voluntary training in peacetime. In the midst of a great war with thousands dying each hour, here was comedy. It was obvious he couldn't be left to eat with the men, nor was he entitled to sit at the officers' mess. The German army breathed in relief when Grotjahn declared he preferred eating in his own room. He found time to publish a popular handbook on health in 1916 of which over 60,000 copies were sold.

A few of the notes in his wartime diary:

"March, 1916—The Berlin populace appears more mongoloid from week to week. Cheekbones are prominent and the skin, with fat gone, lies in folds."

"October, 1916—Submarine warfare will eventually embitter the Americans. Tirpitz's followers are incorrect in under-estimating America's fearful might."

"April, 1917—Come as it may . . . the world is being democratized. Prussian Germany will not escape without a trace."

"May, 1917—Today, substituting for a school physician, examined and vaccinated a few hundred children in an elementary school before they are sent [to the country]. What sorrowful wretched beings! When one compares the magnificent school building with the physically, so miserable human material in it, there comes into one's heart, 'How wonderful in our day are the works of man and how miserable man himself. . . . '"

"June, 1917—Another of those superfluous air attacks that arouse neutrals, on the "fortress" of London, with hundreds of women and children killed or wounded in horrible fashion. Why don't we leave the French with the glory of the Karlsruhe child murders [the French had bombed that German city]. What is most depressing is that our people are dulled to such unnecessary cruelties and regard them as self-understood. Whoever denounces them is now completely isolated."

"August, 1917—This war is an example of advanced use of force, without a single one of the many contestants having any advantage from it. Force as a political weapon is miserably discredited. To recognize this, of course, so fearful a war was necessary."

"**January, 1918**—According to reliable estimates, ten million men have lost their lives thus far in this war. Yet just that seems to make the least impression. Food shortages and lack of fuel actually work most powerfully with us survivors upon our need for peace. This must be recorded because otherwise no one will later any longer believe or even imagine it."

The war's lesson for Germany, according to Grotjahn, should have been a reorientation with her historic task of intensifying her civilization—and rooting it deeply into the structure of the German people. That, he thought, was indissolubly linked to a progressive socialization. Germany as well as Europe was now freed, so he thought, of its most dangerous absolutism, Prussianism.

After his return from his single month's army service, Grotjahn entered the Berlin health department, still retaining his university connections. The city elders, because of electoral restrictions, were recruited chiefly from wealthy merchant families and saw to it that social hygiene and public welfare work was not very intensively or extensively carried on. Wartime aided them. Grotjahn was appointed a member of the group in charge of mass feeding. He was soon placed in control of all milk distribution. He

continued his municipal work for the year and a half after the war, when he was chief of all public children's hospitals with a total capacity of 8,000. Both during and after the war it was Grotjahn who received and conducted all foreign visitors to Berlin's hospitals and other communal institutions.

Throughout the troubled months from November, 1918 to June, 1919 he continued to work at his desk and in his classroom, interrupting a lecture when bursting shells hit the hygiene institute. The events of those months taught him much about revolution; that cannon, gunfire and the behavior of a few excited psychopaths did not form the essential features, but it was rather the sudden collapse of the existing government order. With such penetrating ideas he recognized that revolutions do not occur in normal times, that the continued persecution of radicals is superfluous.

With Rubner still in opposition, the ministry of education in 1920 appointed Grotjahn full professor of social hygiene at the University of Berlin. At his inauguration Rubner spared no effort to humiliate him. Grotjahn did not attend the faculty meetings for many years in consequence.

Later old animosities died, and, with only two contrary votes, he was elected dean for the academic year, 1927-28. Even faculty meetings brought things of interest to him. At the end of each session he rummaged in the waste basket for items of psychological interest, the haphazard scribblings and sketches that his colleagues penciled and penned during the meeting. His son published some of them, with editorial notes, after his death.

From 1921 to 1923 Grotjahn was a member of the Reichstag, still continuing to teach. His cherished social hygiene suffered but not completely. He found time to write a small volume on the hygiene of woman, popular in character that had an edition of over 20,000. He spoke but seven times during the two years as a parliamentarian, usually to an almost empty house. He played an important part, how-

ever, in the framing and passage of the child welfare laws. Most important of all, he continued to cherish parliamentary democracy. He characterized some of his fellow-members as psychopaths, it is true, but "psychopaths in politics in parliament seats," he wrote, "were less dangerous than on thrones."

Back at his specialty, having withdrawn from all political activities, he devoted himself to a study of human reproduction and eugenics (published in 1926) as well as to his pupils. Many of them became prominent in the various fields of public health and social hygiene activities. In 1929 there appeared in joint authorship with G. Junge "Moderate School Reform: the Practical Suggestions of a Physician and a Teacher." What children did not bring in heredity, they wrote, no school could extract.

The section of hygiene of the League of Nations invited him, in 1927, to establish, with the aid of the Rockefeller Foundation, an international bibliographical centre for public health work in Geneva. The personnel of the section was always far too busy, according to Grotjahn, with preparations for meetings and foreign trips to give him any aid. International jealousies prevented the naming of a well-trained German, his choice, to the directorship. He consoled himself with the recollections of all previous futile attempts to interest the wealthy in his work. He says: "If one objectively surveys great foundations, in the new world as well as in the old, the same picture repeats itself—the founders want something big and new, but the funds that are given so generously go only for those purposes that, in any event, have to be met by public funds. All of this instead of experiments on a grand scale." He felt sure that even if his proposed international archive and information center for social hygiene had been begun it would have eventually been throttled or handicapped by interested manipulators of foundations. An invitation by the Soviet government in 1930 was declined because he did not feel himself equal to the exigencies of the trip.

In the autobiography that appeared after his death, he wrote of books he should like to publish. For 1932 he planned "Desired Goals of Popular Nutrition in the Light of Individual and Social Hygiene." The year 1935 was to see "Attempts at a System of Pleasure and its Relationships to Health and Disease, to Work, Education and Public Life" that was to teach the means of enjoyment without harm. On the program for 1939 was "The Simple Man and his Property; An Attempt at a System of Healthful Living."

He wrote of his work: "That need, misery and poverty exist aroused me from childhood on. I have never been able to adjust myself to the idea that that is inevitable. When I lost my childhood faith in perpetual happiness after death, I had to give myself, driven by inner need, to the socialistic belief in a better future earthly state. The greatest part of my life has been devoted to showing the influence of need, misery and poverty on body and soul, on sickness and death. Without the thought of a socialistic ideal of the future I could not have borne that task."

"Physicians as Patients" appeared in 1929. In it he edited, with his own comments, the description of diseases by physicians that suffered from them. One chapter, on cholelithiasis, was unsigned. Only later did I learn that he was writing of himself. He wrote:—

"At irregular intervals, beginning with the years just before the war, I suffered recurrent cramp-like pains over the stomach-liver area that were so severe at times as to necessitate morphine injections. Both the gastroenterologist consulted and I made a probable diagnosis of gall stones. In January, 1920, I suddenly became ill with severe abdominal pains, marked jaundice and a slight fever that lasted but two days. A morphine injection brought rest. The acute attack disappeared after a few days. It was repeated three months later in similar fashion. . . .

"True colic is fearful in reality. It is quite different from a severe toothache in that, while less localized, it is linked up with an unbearable sensation of bursting. One is scarcely capable of thought and is tormented by an unceasing compulsion to change position. Tossing about, lying on the abdomen, sitting up, then falling back again did not help and naturally brought no relief . . . Despite the severe colicky pains and the comforting expectation of receiving the hypodermic injection I found it most unpleasant when a colleague palpated my abdomen with ice-cold hands. . . .

" . . . The severity of an attack was always broken by an injection. Jaundice disappeared within a few days. Dull backaches and the symptoms of a chronic gastric catarrh lingered for weeks and months. I refused internal medication, prescribed, as well as balneotherapy at Carlsbad or Mergentheim that was earnestly recommended, because its efficacy depends on the patient's self-delusion and upon the uncritical sense of etiology of the physician. Beside operation, only the dietetic treatment of the coincidental gastric catarrh can be effective. . . .

"With this therapy or non-therapy, rehabilitation came within a year, during which time the second attack was milder than the first and the third least severe of all. Had I taken a Carlsbad cure or a homeopathic biochemical or some other medication well recommended in theoretical medicine, my recovery would have been attributed to them. In any event, frank therapeutic nihilism helped in my case. I should, however, not talk of healing for the return of the malady is not only not impossible but quite probable, and those colleagues will be right who have voiced the opinion that I had better have let myself be operated upon after the first attack. Still I do not regret having declined operation. I will not alter my stand even should a catastrophe some day drive me to it, when the surgeon will say, 'He should have let himself be operated upon sooner. Now it is too late!' I have, despite everything, at least remained free of attacks up to the present, six years in all, and I will remain so a few years more. I have an impression however that all is not yet right in my abdomen. . . ."

Nine years after the last attack of biliary colic in an attempt to determine the protein minimum as well as the digestibility of rye, he avoided meat in his diet and ate a large quantity of rye bread with his meals. In June and July, 1931, Grotjahn was again obliged to take a meat-containing diet. August 18, 1931, after an interim of eleven years, he was seized with biliary colic which recurred daily for two days. With his aversion to medical treatment, although he had been dean of the medical faculty only a short time before, Grotjahn summoned a different physician each time from a public ambulance station, each time informing the doctor that he was under treatment, needing only a hypodermic injection to relieve the attack. Only after the third attack did he declare himself ready to enter a hospital, and he spoke of premonitions of death. He prepared everything with characteristic conscientiousness and exactitude, writes his son, for the eventuality of his not returning.

At the hospital he was seized again, this attack the worst he had ever experienced. He sprang out of bed attempting to jump from the window. Morphine was effective. He repeated what he had said during the attack, that the long expected perforation had taken place and told his son, "The time has now come when I would begin to employ euthanasia. That's why I let you study medicine. Remember what I have always asked of you and now let me die in peace."

The following day he discussed his condition, believing and hoping that the end was at hand. He spoke with shattering calmness of his books, both those planned and those in course of preparation. With complete clarity he diagnosed his condition: cholelithiasis, perforation, peritonitis, ileus. Operation seemed the only way out.

"At my age it won't go very well. They will say it was too late, but I was colic-free for eleven years. See to it that I get complete anesthesia even if my heart is bad. If you wish, have a necropsy performed."

September 2, at operation, behind diffuse old adhesions, a very large biliary abscess was found which extended up under the diaphragm, across the midline to the spleen. The markedly contracted gall bladder was filled with stones. There was a large perforation in the common duct. The wound was partially closed with drainage.

Cardiac stimuli brought on delirium. Grotjahn sat up in bed, continually demanding his spectacles, dug beneath the covers as if arranging his papers. He was lecturing to his classes, with a clarity of style, speaking with so facile a choice of words as he never had before.

"If the physiologist says the protein minimum is 60 grams," he cried, "if the pathologist says the protein minimum is 60 grams, it is then the task of the social hygienist to see to it that every man of the German people really gets that minimum!" To his son he cried, "We must tear down national frontiers. We'll do it! They belong to another world. Come often, my son, and tell me about it. We'll exchange reports."

Because of the hopelessness of his condition he received no stimulation after that. Pantopon and scopolamin kept him quiet. "His expression is not empty nor is it that of a

sleeper," noted his son at the time, "but it is thoughtful, ruminating, often mobile, as if searching for words. It seems as if his delirium has given way to thoughts and dreams."

Examination a few hours after death revealed, apart from the operative findings, an acute dilatation of both cardiac ventricles.

There are thoughts of death in the last paragraph of his autobiography:—

"The melancholic basic pattern of my temperament also furnishes the precious gift that nature has given us melancholics with compensatory care, namely, the gift to await death, as a somewhat unpunctual but yet dependable friend, with that equanimity that speaks to us in the words of my grandfather, Heinrich Grotjahn, that I find written on the inner cover of his last medical diary in that delicate yet firm Biedermeier script of his—

'Each one tries in vain
To solve Life's puzzle.
If he wearies brooding,
It solves itself in Death.'"